



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

Fish and Wildlife Service

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**"KNOW BEFORE YOU GO!" ARE WATCHWORDS OF NEW BROCHURE FOR TRAVELERS
FROM FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE, WORLD WILDLIFE FUND--U.S.**

When it comes to buying wildlife products, it's a jungle out there!

And though exotic animals and plants appear enticing in foreign market places, the prospective buyer is entering a realm where the laws are complicated and the pitfalls are considerable.

It's a world where, in most cases, you're on your own!

Each year, more than 10 million Americans travel abroad, many of them to regions of the globe that support a flourishing trade in exotic birds and animals, fashionable jewelry and furs, and unique tropical plants. American globetrotters spend an estimated \$14 billion while traveling, much of it for souvenirs, curios, and other collectibles commonly fashioned from foreign wildlife and plants.

While some of these products are legal to import into the United States, many others run afoul of Federal and international laws protecting animals and plants that are facing extinction. Often what begins as an enjoyable vacation ends with a bitter lesson as these "illegal aliens" are confiscated, leaving the traveler with nothing more than a depleted bankroll and a receipt for seized property.

"The old adage, 'Let the buyer beware,' has never been more appropriate to a situation than it is to wildlife trade," says Frank Dunkle, Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Federal agency responsible for the enforcement of the Nation's wildlife laws protecting endangered species. "People who have, in many cases, innocently thought their wildlife purchases abroad were legal have learned the hard way that it's best to 'know before you go.'"

Now the Fish and Wildlife Service, in cooperation with the World Wildlife Fund--U.S., has developed a new brochure alerting travelers to the pitfalls of buying wildlife products abroad. "Buyer Beware!" describes the animal and plant products that are most commonly sold in foreign countries and whose importation into the United States is illegal. It also explains the Federal and international laws and treaties under which the Fish and Wildlife Service seeks to stem the growing trade in illegal products and to promote the conservation of the world's endangered wildlife.

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Because of the complexity of regulations governing wildlife importations, "Buyer Beware!" advises travelers with specific questions about certain countries they will be visiting, or products, to contact the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or the World Wildlife Fund well in advance of their trip to obtain more detailed information.

"Our aim," says Dunkle, "is to remind citizens who will be heading off to the Caribbean, South America, and the Pacific as winter tourist season begins that they have a responsibility to uphold our country's wildlife laws. It is an extension of our 'Take Pride in America' theme -- each of us must ensure that our actions neither contribute to the demise of endangered wildlife, nor flaunt America's laws designed to protect these species."

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Single copies of "Buyer Beware!" are available free from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Publications Unit, Room 148 Matomic Building, 1717 H Street NW., Washington, DC, 20240.

Note to travel agents and tour operators: Limited bulk quantities of "Buyer Beware!" are available to you as a service to your customers. Send your request on letterhead to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Public Affairs, Room 3447, Department of the Interior, 18th and C Streets NW., Washington, DC 20240.